

**STATUS OF THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A composition comprising an isolated collection of mutant nematodes altered in an osmotic stress resistant (OSR-1) gene to reduce or increase sensitivity to osmotic desiccation stress, said mutant nematodes comprising *C. elegans* and nematodes having an OSR-1 gene homologous to the OSR-1 gene of *C. elegans*.

2. (original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said mutant nematodes comprise a knock-out osmotic stress resistant (OSR-1) mutation.

3. (original) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said collection of mutant nematodes is configured for administration to a host.

4. (original) The composition of Claim 3, wherein said host comprises a plant.

5. (original) The composition of Claim 3, wherein said host comprises an animal.

6. (currently amended) A method ~~offer contacting~~ treating a host organism, comprising ~~the steps of exposing said host to the composition of claim 1 a collection of isolated mutant nematodes altered in sensitivity to desiccation stress as compared to non-mutant nematodes.~~

7. (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said host is a plant.

8. (original) The method of Claim 6, wherein said host is an animal.

9. (cancelled)

10. (cancelled)

11. (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) A composition comprising;
  - a) a composition comprising small interfering RNA duplex, or vectors encoding said small interfering RNA duplex, configured to inhibit expression of C. elegans OSR-1 protein, and a nucleic acid transfecting agent.